The current problems of labor both in the United States and globally are philosophical as well as practical. Indeed, the practical problems are at root philosophical. Whether labor is treated fairly or is exploited, whether it is accorded recognition, whether it is considered a non-renewable and precious resource, or an inexhaustible and disposable one, etc., are practical questions that presuppose philosophical positions. This section of "Current Labor Problems" will introduce students to the tradition of philosophical consideration in the West of the so-called "labor question"—what is the status and prospects for labor in human society—through a close reading of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958). Students will be expected to engage with text and the tradition both intrinsically and extrinsically—that is, both with the text and as the text relates to current labor issues (and vice versa).

**GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In this course, students will:

- Read closely a single philosophical text on the place and function of labor and work in human society, Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (1958);

- Trace various threads running through Arendt’s text back to their source and forward to their implications for the way we organize our work and live our lives; and thus to

- Learn better how to think more philosophically—i.e., *sub specie aeternitatis*, roughly "from the perspective of the eternal"—about the problems of our time.

**PARTIAL READING LIST**


- Selected critical and statistical studies of relevant economic facts and social theories, as well as excerpts from other authors